



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

JUL 22 2015

Dear Governor:

We share a deep concern that we continue to lose too many members of our communities to opioid drug overdoses. The United States is in the midst of a prescription opioid and heroin epidemic, driven in part by the increased—and often inappropriate—prescribing of opioid pain relievers. In 2013, overdoses from prescription opioid pain relievers claimed more than 16,200 lives, with more than 145,000 people dying from these overdoses in the last decade. Heroin deaths have also been climbing sharply, nearly quadrupling between 2002 and 2013. The resulting health, social, and economic consequences for communities across the country are enormous.

We also know that this issue knows no boundaries and we must work together, at the federal, state, and local level to address this crisis. States play a central role in prevention, treatment and recovery. That is why I have joined with the National Governors Association (NGA), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD), and we are pleased to invite your state to participate in a second national meeting on this topic. The meeting, **“Advancing Policy and Practice: A 50-State Convening to Prevent Opioid Overdose and Addiction” will take place September 17-18, 2015, in Washington, DC.**

Last summer, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) invited all 50 states and the District of Columbia to an intensive two-day working meeting to develop action plans on prescriber-focused interventions to address opioid-related overdoses and deaths. In April, I sent a letter giving you an update on our work and further plans to move forward on this critical issue, including plans to host another convening of all 50 states and D.C. again this year. Many of you have answered my letter with your plans, best practices and lessons learned. Our agenda for this year’s convening will be informed by your responses.

I invite you to assemble a three-person delegation of state officials to participate in this meeting on behalf of your state. Though the federal government is critical to addressing the problem, states are key actors in addressing many facets of this public health crisis. Your state team will join colleagues from across the country to share experiences implementing proven strategies and best practices for preventing opioid use disorders and overdoses. The participants will also

engage with leadership and experts from HHS and our partner organizations to help inform both federal and state actions moving forward.

Actions to address opioid abuse and addiction must target a range of actors, including prescribers, high-risk patients, and those engaged in heroin use. While last year's meeting focused exclusively on prescriber-targeted interventions, this year we will also include a focus on both naloxone and medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

HHS will support your delegation's participation in this meeting by providing for the travel, lodging, and per diem for your state's three team members. We encourage participation from the Governors' staff as well as other state officials who are involved in activities associated with controlled substance prescribing, naloxone, and MAT, such as the state prescription drug monitoring program, state medical licensing board, state substance abuse agency, and/or state health department. You are welcome to include up to two additional members in your state delegation, though additional team members will be responsible for travel costs associated with their participation. For further meeting information, please contact [50StateConvening@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:50StateConvening@mathematica-mpr.com).

Designated participants, including local attendees, should complete their meeting registration online by **August 17, 2015**: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/50-state-working-meeting-to-prevent-opioid-related-overdoses-tickets-17445671473>. Registrants will receive a follow up correspondence from our logistics contractor, Mathematica Policy Research, with guidance on travel arrangements. Participants with additional logistical requirements may contact [50StateConvening@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:50StateConvening@mathematica-mpr.com) for assistance.

We look forward to partnering with you to address this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sylvia M. Burwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Sylvia M. Burwell